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Number 27, September 1987 (Incorporating MUF08 76)

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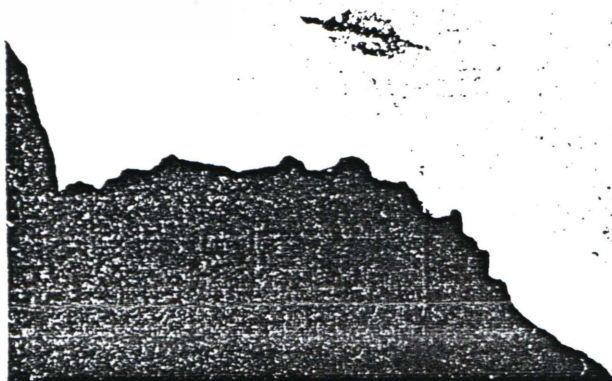
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EDITORIAL NOTES

Conspiracy theory is certainly the issue in British ufology at the moment with two recent books on the subject (one reviewed in this issue, another to be reviewed next time).

Interest in 'cover-ups' has not been a major feature of UFO interest in this country for some time, and the recent resurgence of interest seems to be a follow-on from the promotion of the Rendlesham case, encouraged by the flood of FOIA material released by US groups such as CAUS. But the recent surge of public interest in the topic, indicated by the exceptional sales of Tim Good's *Above Top Secret* is remarkable. It must surely be related to the more general public awareness of covert government operations prompted by the *Say G****** affair, and the Government's attempts to prevent the publication of Mr P**** W****'s memoirs.

It may be true (or there again

it may not) that your editor has come into possession of a copy of this work, and has been eagerly scouring it for any revelations of possible ufological importance, but without too much success. There would appear to be, for instance, no mention of the noted intelligence officer Mr G***** C*****, and neither is there any suggestion that Messrs Burgess and Maclean were involved in the Cedric Allingham hoax.

On the other hand, how many of those who have bought *Above Top Secret* will be very disappointed that it contains no references to extraterrestrial plots to overthrow the government of Mr H***** W*****, nor does it reveal that MI5 chief Sir R**** H***** was a secret BUFORA double agent?

I think we should be told.

[This editorial has been compiled under the Government's reporting restrictions.]

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PETER ROGERSON'S NORTHERN ECHOES

Few watchers of the recent ITV mini-series dramatisation of Alison Lurie's *Imaginary Friends* would have realised that it was based on facts. Ms Lurie's inspiration was Leon Festinger's *When Prophecy Fails*, though the character Tom McMann appears to have been based on Charles Laughheed ("Dr Armstrong") who was an occultist rather than a sociologist.

The novel does raise some extremely valid points about 'participative observation'. I found that it also made a valuable comment on a UFO/psychic circus of a few years back, one of the chief participants of which expressed a wish for "a mature investigator, not a youth of sixteen who can't satisfy me".

Somewhat disturbing news has come to light: it appears that virtually no American books on our subjects are going to be available through the British

Library, which now seems to classify all except the dullest tomes as "recreational reading". A prominent casualty of this policy is Susan Blackmore's *Autobiography of a Parapsychologist*. Would the autobiography of a leading British physicist or psychiatrist be thus treated?

As this is being written the Teesside 'child sex abuse' furore is developing. Are we seeing a modern example of the witchfinder, who searches for the contemporary equivalent of the witches' mark, which can only be detected by the specially trained or gifted? In the US tales of child abuse rings have become tales of black magic and witches sabbats, with abduction tales which are not very dissimilar from UFO abduction stories. In fact there are a number of disturbing links between child sex abuse and UFO abduction accounts. This is a subject I shall certainly return to on some future occasion.

The great 40th anniversary has passed without major incident. It looks like we are not going to have the great wave of 1987. In a couple of years even BOLS will be forgotten as a fad. Also passing is the rather sinister 'pro-death' N.D.E. of a couple of years ago, though I suppose we will eventually get a collection of the near-death experiences of AIDS victims.

RANDOM JOTTINGS

the legendary Colonel Halt of Rendlesham fame. "I stand before you a bitterly disappointed man", declaimed ashen-faced 'Flash' Harry Harris, as he saw the £170 ferry fare he had wired to Halt in Belgium sailing gaily over the horizon.

Halt was apparently ensconced at Greenham Common, where it would appear he preferred the company of Peace Campers and demonstrators to the genial faces of a BUFORA conference!

Most of the papers presented were interesting and illuminating - apart of course from the engineers'. Can anything be done about engineers? Just because they are supposedly 'technical' and 'scientific', other ufologists show an exaggerated respect for their opinions. But when they stray outside their specialist field, they are no better qualified than anyone else.

But my God! They can bore for Britain! (And Norway too, for that matter) They're worse than chartered accountants!!

The 1987 BUFORA International Congress was a splendidly organised affair, in the impressively comfortable surroundings of the London Business School (the main auditorium is something like the General Assembly of the United Nations - you rather expect to see Sir Robert Gairy introducing the Grenadan delegation!). Although I was not able to be present for the whole three-day event, it was a great pleasure meeting many *Magonia* readers and correspondents - some, known previously only by their ferocious letters, proved rather gentler in the flesh!

High spot of the weekend was the semi-sinister non appearance of

B R E A K A L E G

The UFO Experience as Theatre

**Martin Kottmeyer considers the
dramatological significance of
UFO events**



What is the purpose of the UFO phenomenon? Answer that question and perhaps the rest of the picture will fall into place. What they are and where they are coming from might be better answered by approaching the problem in the reverse direction.

The solution to the teleology of the UFO phenomenon has in the past tended towards two hypotheses, when they have tended anywhere at all: learning and teaching. I reject both these alternatives on the grounds of non-contact. All good education is based on interaction between student and teacher. If they want to sway us they would not display themselves furtively and seek to create fear and paranoia. If they want to learn from us they should come among us and ask questions. If they want us culturally unchanged as an experiment in sociology, they would disguise their activities better.

The irrationality of the UFO phenomenon has been commented upon frequently by ufologists. The alien way of doing things has frequently gone beyond the inscrutable into the totally dumb. Toying around with patterns in UFO behaviour one day, I realised that, for all its irrationality, the UFO phenomenon nevertheless *did* possess a logic. Not the logic of education, the logic of theatre.

The tip-off was all the chases. Chases are staple items in our fantasy lives. It is a formula element to most action-adventure television. Where would film-makers be if there were no screeching tyres and rising speedometers to maintain the illusion something is happening? Half the block-busters of recent years have chases in them: *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Indiana Jones & the Temple of Doom*, and appropriately, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

The reliance on chase sequences is understandable: it is a quick, easy way of heightening tension and accenting the conflicting relationships between characters. The kinetic imagery and the hint of danger excites the senses.

The frequency of chases in movies and TV contrasts

outrageously to their frequency in real life: few people ever witness such a chase, let alone participate in one. The audience presumably realises that this is unreal, but forgoes criticising that illogic since they recognise fiction operates by conventions only occasionally having to do with real life. Reality, after all, is not as exciting as entertainment. That's why entertainment exists. Those conventions are excused by one phrase - dramatic licence.

**The alien way of doing things
has frequently gone beyond
the inscrutable into the
totally dumb.**

In ufology it is a simple matter of observation that chases are absurdly commonplace. In a relatively small sample of 80 cases drawn from the Uintah region of Utah by Frank Salisbury, no less than six chases were in evidence. Salisbury felt this constituted a pattern which forced "the question of why UFOs should want to follow cars" onto ufologists.

George Fawcett in a wider study of the repetitive features of the UFO phenomenon determined the "pursuit of UFOs by planes in the sky, and by cars on open highways" is a feature which must

be explained if we are to solve the flying saucer mystery. For the year of 1967 alone, Fawcett tallied 81 UFO car chases worldwide.

What is more, the chases involve every dramaturgical gimmick that can be seen in mass entertainment. The UFO phenomenon rivals the James Bond series in its attempt to yield every permutation of vehicular mayhem. Consider if you will an incomplete tally I have compiled of vehicle-related motifs culled from the literature: saucer chases car; saucer bumps car; car controlled by alien force; saucer forces car out of control; vehicle becomes airborne; car lifted up on two wheels, car made to do 180° turn; car teleported; saucer crashes into car; police chase saucer; saucer chases ambulance; saucer chases train, plane, hitch-hiker, snowmobile; saucer fires at car; man jumps from car before crashing into building; saucer blocks road; saucer plays 'chicken' with plane; saucer rescues 'copter; saucer swallows plane; saucer blows up plane; and plane disappears after reporting trouble involving saucer.

The existence and character of these chases lacks any plausible explanation outside the realm of theatre. What possible rationale could chases serve for an extra-terrestrial piloting a souped-up aerial dragster which, if some reports serve as a guide, could fly rings round a dragonfly? If it wanted the earth vessel they could latch onto it in seconds and not spend a great deal of time curling the hairs of the drivers of the vehicles. The spectacle of cars, including police cars, chasing vessels with the implicit ability to achieve

escape velocity from Earth itself has to be viewed as pure farce if we aren't meant to accept these episodes under the proviso of dramatic license.

Like chases, abduction is a staple item in action-adventure drama: the disparity of the frequency of abductions in drama compared to real life is again striking. The essence of all drama is conflict; for conflict to take place one requires a pretext to bring antagonists together. Ideally, a moral dilemma must exist. Kidnapping sets up such a clear moral dilemma and

at the same time inevitably brings hero into interaction with the villain.

We know abduction was not a necessary feature of extra-terrestrial contacts. Originally the novelty of the contact was enough to capture the interest of its audience. Problems arose in such contacts: the choice of contactee, and the aliens' chary attitude to giving quality gifts commensurate with their benevolent talk. After a number of embarrassing incidents like the Adamski photos and Howard Menger's recantation, the fate of contactees was declining audiences. The advent of abductions represented a fortuitous turn of dramaturgy. Abductions brought aliens and humans together, and then overlaid an element of conflict and power. It excused the lack of contact and gifts and, by diminishing their friendliness, permitted a larger measure of inscrutability in their acts.

Abduction is plainly unethical in the failure to obtain consents and, more significantly in its flouting of the conventions of the host culture. It is at least problematic that a culture possessing the rationality and co-operativeness necessary to build the technology implicit in saucer sightings should engage in abduction. It is more probable, to my view, that it is a dramatic convention underlying the frequency of abduction among contemporary UFO contacts.

Amnesia. Sometimes called the common-cold of the soap opera

Most of these abductions interestingly involve another dramaturgical gimmick - amnesia. Sometimes called the common-cold of the soap opera, it is an extreme rarity in real life, but its dramatic possibilities are very seductive to TV writers. The victim is confronted with the mystery of a chunk missing from his life along with conflicts in the shifted relationship of the victim with his friends and enemies. The solution usually involves a climactic resolution of a traumatic character. There are also elements of sympathy and tension which can be played upon. Writers can hardly be faulted for returning again and again to this device.

In ufology likewise, amnesia is common. It is generally limited to a small period of missing time and is not associated with physical or emotional trauma.

Rather it is considered an erasure of events from the mind by the abductors. What gives away the dramatic intent of this event is the recoverability of the memory. Without recoverability there would of course be no plot. Permanent erasure would seem to be a feat more fitting of a super-technology.

Explosions and crashes are the punctuation marks of adventure shows. Again there is an exaggerated frequency among UFO reports which seems to speak more to a shared function of entertainment rather than to an aspect of technological realities.

Immunity to weapons is an often seen gimmick in movie monsters and conveys a sense of alienness and power. It does the same in ufology and doubles to keep evidence slipping into the possession of individuals on Earth.

Violating scientific sensibilities are a number of science-fiction scams which have found their way into UFO lore: things like anti-gravity, personal levitation, invisibility, mind reading, force-fields, matter inter-penetration and time travel. No scientist could be faulted for disbelief in the 'anything goes' quality to alien technology; some of these devices have been part of the stage magician's bag of tricks for centuries. And as it did for such performers, these illusions produce the desired quality of awe when seen in UFO reports

only be accepted under the shelter of dramatic licence. Realising ufology is shaped by such conventions, it can come as no surprise that there are dozens of parallels of these gimmicks in science fiction films incorporating themes of alien contact and invasion

In saying this I do not imply that there is a conscious plagiarism. Most of the parallels arise simply by the necessities of dramatic licence. Exposure to cinematic aliens may set up an understanding of dramatic logic which is drawn on at a later date, but the rôle of that form of inspiration is probably not extensive.

If there is one case of parallelism which seems to involve plagiarism it would have to be the similarities between the messages of the alien in the notorious *Plan Nine from Outer Space* and the message of 'Valiant Thor' of Venus as presented in the 1967 book *Stranger at the Pentagon*. I must say however, I cannot believe anyone would have the *chutzpah* to consciously model their story on material from that monumentally bad film. It *could* be coincidence!

Science fiction and the UFO phenomenon is more directly linked by content rather than convention. Marjorie Hope Nicholson pointed out the link flying saucers had to the centuries old tradition of cosmic voyages in her seminal history of that tradition, *Voyages to the Moon*. Considering her book came out in 1948, long before all the dramatic twists transpired in ufology, her assessment looks virtually clairvoyant

The force-field is a more recent invention of SF writers - I know of no SF apologist who grants the slightest plausibility to the concept. The use of force-fields is one of the strongest arguments that UFO reporters borrow from SF in constructing a dramatic vehicle for their observations.

Mind rays are equally suspect, given the complexity of the human brain. Their visibility speaks for their dramaturgical origin: light is unlikely to effect highly specific changes in brain function. The possibility of light being an incidental function of a programming radiation suggests energies more likely to fry a brain than modify it.

These examples of dramaturgical gimmickry are but the most distinctive examples of a whole pattern of behaviour displayed by the UFO phenomenon which can

The idea of the extraterrestrial and its creative exploration is central to both SF and UFOs. The dreams of abductees can trace their ancestry through a lineage composed of H G Wells, Jules Verne, Emanuel Swedenborg and Jonathan Swift, originating in the dreams of Kepler's *Somnium*. Kepler's trip to the moon opened this universe of imagination and it was well explored by the time Adamski hitched a ride to the pastoral land of the moon.

Bertrand Meheust has written an extensive study of the parallels between ufology and pre-saucer SF, which he finds presages many of the accoutrements of contemporary ufology: electromagnetic effects (EMX), animal reactions, soil traces, light rays, and amnesia. Entities and craft in early SF display the same magical abilities as contemporary UFO entities. He includes over a

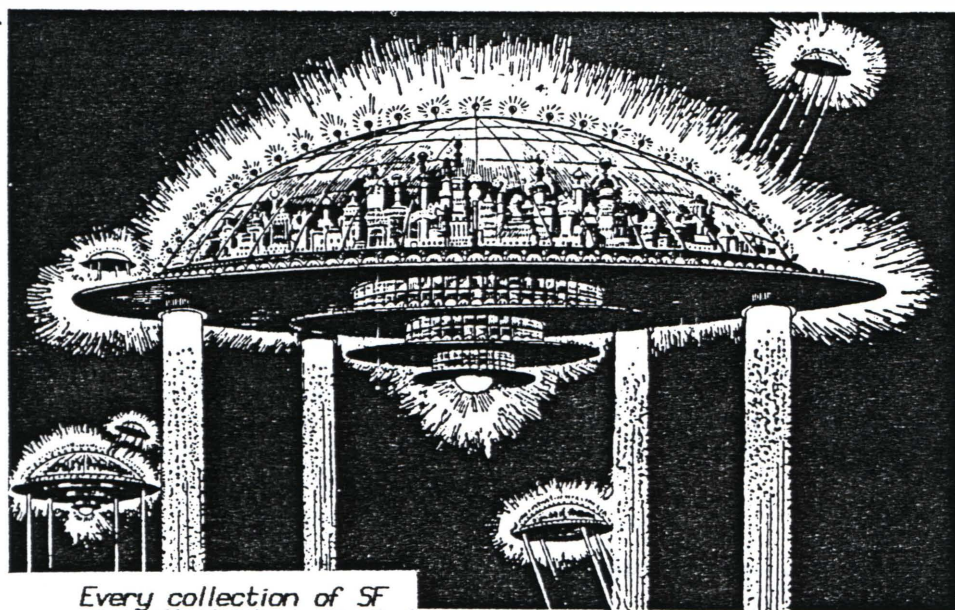
dozen illustrations of saucers pre-dating the modern era by decades which are true to the present version down to extended rims, conning towers and portholes.

This last is a particularly enticing conundrum. Every collection of SF illustrations includes examples of saucers drawn before they turned up in real skies. When one first sees these prefigurements the identity admits no ambiguity. You don't think "This could be a flying saucer", you think "this is a flying saucer". One can offer numerous explanations for this identity. Perhaps SF artists had saucer encounters before 1947. Perhaps the drawings lodged in peoples' memories and after 1947 the images became overlayed in UFO misidentifications. Perhaps SF artists are symbolic. Perhaps there are deep psychological resonances in the shape, favouring its appearance in extraterrestrial contexts. Perhaps aliens designed their craft from the illustrations. Then, too, it could be happenstance.

I believe the resemblance is chance. SF illustrators were partial to rockets in most drawings, in deference to scientific extrapolations of their time, but they by no means limited themselves to a tiny repertoire of possibilities. They exercised their creativity to explore a wide range of novel forms which might be utilised for space travel. From the collections of SF drawings I have to hand I find craft in all these forms: spheres, hemispheres, ellipses, eggs, cones, squares, cylinders, triangles, Saturn-shapes, doughnuts, dumbbells, hearts, teardrops, boomerangs, fish, and other elementary shapes.

There were, naturally enough, marvellously convoluted, arty structures beyond simple description, and non-vessels, like sky-cycles, and a floating half-shell furnished only with cushions! The flying saucer forms but one fairly bland variation in that diversity of shapes. There is an inevitability to the saucer appearance given its fairly simple construction by adding a centre cabin to a disc.

The argument works as well in the opposite direction. While there is a partiality to the disc there is an abundant diversity of shapes to be found in UFO reports. I have found all the following described or drawn in the UFO literature: spheres, hemispheres, ellipses, eggs,



Every collection of SF illustrations includes examples of saucers drawn before they turned up in real skies

cones, cylinders, squares, triangles, Saturn-shapes, doughnuts, dumbbells, teardrops, (beginning to sound familiar?) and so on and so forth. The saucer parallel just cannot be seen as amazing in the face of all these other similarities. Some, like a UFO/SF parallel between a teardrop vessel having a Saturn ring encircling it in an identical relationship are far more amazing. It is only when the forms become more intricate or daring that one encounters difficulties in finding parallels between the two genre.

One can consider the creativity shown in saucer forms by considering all the accessories available on UFOs. They rival the Detroit auto industry in all the options, including in both cases: fins, portholes, picture windows, bubble sun-roofs, all-over chrome, textured surfaces, customised paint jobs, racing stripes, decals, exhaust work, antennae, grills, curb feelers, big screen TV and a myriad of light arrays.

As regards the casting of the role of the ufonaut, a similar display of creative diversity has been found. Alvin Lawson wrote a paper which strongly demonstrated this point. He found UFO aliens could be grouped broadly into six categories: human, humanoid, animal, robotic, apparitional, and forms possessing exotic deformities (improper numbers of limbs, misproportion of bodily parts). Lawson goes on to show the imaginary beings of various fictional cosmologies display an identical range of forms. Each of the six types has members in Greek myth, Christian

myth, with lore, fairy lore, Alice's Wonderland, Shakesperian drama, science fiction and even cereal-box art!

Two of the few people who have tried to show a lack of creativity exists in ufology are Frederick Malmstrom and Richard Coffman. To do this they constructed an imaginary alien on a unipedal anatomy. They then opined that aliens would more likely be based on exotic physiologies than on the frequent human and humanoid forms. It constitutes an anthropocentric bias. Valid to a point, the point falters in berating the uncreativity of UFO reporters. Unipeds have been reported on at least four occasions - Pascagoula; C.A.V. of Peru; Harrah, Washington of January 19, 1977; Paciencia, Brazil on September 30, 1977. It also fails to recognise the presence of virtually unclassifiable creations like Betty Andreasson's tree-frog-like biped bearing eyes on the tips of stalks worn on its non-head, or the jelly bag creatures doing a witches' dance around a shimmering saucer in a Swedish encounter from 1958. There can be no justification in trying to slight the creativity of the phenomenon's imaginativeness.

If there is to be any caveat to the diversity of aliens it is the total absence of one category of imaginary beasts: ultra gigantic creatures such as those on the magnitude of King Kong, Godzilla and all the walking skyscrapers traipsing around the Japanese landscape in monster movies. Science fiction has shown few qualms in using this form when ripping off H. G. Wells' alien

invasion plot. Stanislaw Lem colourfully described this pulp SF behaviour in these terms:

"It practiced a ruthless exploitation, ransacking, in its search for inspiration, history textbooks and the Linnean system alike, in order to provide lizards, cuttlefish with grasping arms, crabs, insects, and so forth with intelligence. When even that became threadbare and presently boring, the theme SF had run into the ground was in its teratological extremism taken over by the third-rate horror movie, which is perfectly bare of thoughtful content" [About Strugatsky's 'Roadside Picnic' in *Science Fiction Studies* 31, November 1983.]

The absence of ultra gigantic aliens is one of the few hopeful signs of rationality in the general shape of the UFO phenomenon. Such ultra gigantism has been applied to the ships on occasion but nothing like Voltaire's *Micromegas* has yet to transpire on earth. Unless there is a sociological factor repressing the reporting and acceptance of these reports, their absence is a curious problem for an imagination-based theatre paradigm. Though hardly a fatal objection to all that has been seen already, I feel they should exist. I urge any investigators who have been exposed to such cases to make them known.

The absence of ultra gigantic aliens is one of the few hopeful signs of rationality in the general shape of the UFO phenomenon

The diversity of imagination and the use of dramatic licence seen in the form of the UFO phenomenon supports a view of it as theatre. Where does the witness fit in this view? Here we must turn to a question first asked rhetorically by J Allen Hynek in his book *The UFO Experience*. "Can he possibly be acting this out? Could he be such a good actor? And if so to what end?" Hynek claims to have mused over these questions many times without resolution.

It is my turn to tackle the question and I answer it in the affirmative. UFO reporters are acting. It is the descriptions of witness performance by Hynek himself which leads me to this view. He says the witnesses typically must grope for the language to convey the unspeakable qualities the UFO has manifested. This is so clearly a method of heightening awe and mystery that it hardly needs pointing out

Another aspect of witness reports is that they are so often framed in an 'escalation of hypotheses' formula. To Hynek this suggests a rational exploration of possibilities of what the UFO could be. But it can be considered a way of building dramatic tension toward the climactic realisation one is in the presence of a mystery.

Superlatives are liberally sprinkled among accounts to accent the excitement of the witness. Hynek says the phrase "I never saw anything like this in my whole life", recurs frequently in his interrogations. Verisimilitude is a traditional prerequisite of theatre. The display of sincerity and the artless attestations he didn't or couldn't make this all up - Scout's Honour! - is no defence against this view.

I am not saying UFO reporters do not believe what they are telling us: what is being recognised is that interrogation necessitates a social performance in which the reporter seeks to convince an authority figure to validate his experience. Being a good actor simply means upholding the conventions of this situation. In this view I am following Erving Goffman and his work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, where he shows that we continually take on roles in our

personality, and his losing himself in a role to the exclusion of awareness of his surroundings. One can see the dramatic role of hypnosis most forcefully in hypnotic regression for the purpose of revealing 'past life experiences'. Ian Watson, in his critique of this field notes these incarnations are typically relived with "very considerable emotion". It necessitates the hypothesis of "some extremely powerful and unconscious acting mechanism within the mind".

Watson powerfully argues these experiences lack evidentiality and their content at times derives from works of historical fiction. This is reinforced by Alvin Lawson's experiments (see *Magonia* 10) where he placed subjects with no UFO experience into the role of a UFO reporter and got stories similar in most ways to subjects who had UFO experiences. Those with prior experience were a little more emotional (i.e. dramatic) than those who had not; this is fully in line with UFO reporters being of a more dramatic predisposition.

To what end is such acting directed? Applause. Approval. The figure of the interrogator is used to attest the truthfulness and sanity of the reporter. When the investigator decides not to do this, either because the performance is flawed or because the UFO is explicable, the reaction of the reporter is often disappointment and hostility. Bad reviews will do that. If curiosity and truth were the driving force, satisfaction and praise for the investigator's acumen would be more logical reactions.

Identity with the reporter is another end, and it is one supported by the perversities of the UFO phenomenon. All things are arrayed against him: he is besieged by the forces of chaos; his powers of action are stripped from him; locomotion, aggression and documentation all fail in the UFO's presence; he is chased down by mindless geeks, for impenetrable reasons. And he faces it alone. Society refuses to understand him, he didn't consent to it, he does not understand it. He can't even prove it. And that, as they say ...

That's entertainment.

This is an extract from Martin Kottmeyer's forthcoming book *The Schlemazel Factor; or what good is an alien you can't party with?* to be published by Fortean Tames.

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interactions with others and adopt accepted conventions in order to be taken seriously. In Goffman's sense, most people are good actors.

The use of hypnotic regression by can be viewed as an extension of the role-taking behaviour of witnesses and thus an appropriate instrument of the Theatre of the UFO. In Theodore Sarbin's interpretation of hypnosis, subjects do not behave according to any kind of physiological or mentalistic model: they respond according to the preconceptions and expectations held by that individual. Change their expectations about what hypnosis is, and their behaviour changes. There is no universal pattern of response.

The introspective experience of hypnotic subjects is often indistinguishable from that of the actor. This is markedly true with respect to such features as the dissociated state of the actor from his 'normal'

The other day a young man came into my office, seeking to find the history of his house: who had lived in it and especially who might have died in it. Was it just curiosity? No. There was 'something wrong' with the house, where the baby would not sleep and the dog had begun to howl. Maybe, he thought, it was haunted.

The same day a woman came in, trying to discover what occupied the land where her house now stood before it was built. She gave no reason, but on previous occasions this type of query has been stimulated by fears of hauntings. At least once a month someone comes to me with this type of enquiry.

These incidents are from my experience as a local history librarian in a northern town. It is apparent to me that there exist many unreported 'haunted houses', and that a powerful factor in this is a fear of the unofficial 'off-campus' history of the house. A history of the organic round of birth, procreation and, especially, death, which is perceived by the house's current occupier as being oppressive, palpable and threatening. In some senses the house, 'the home' is an extension of the individual's body or personality; hence the trauma induced by burglaries. Similarly the house is seen as having been imprinted, one might almost say contaminated, by the previous occupants. The house has borne witness to their most intimate moments.

To the new occupant, the 'incomer', the haunted house has a 'history' or a 'reputation' in a personal, almost sexual, way. The house is not a 'virgin'. It has been violated by the presence of other human activity, which may afflict and infect the incomer. The sorts of questions which are asked about the haunted house's previous owners or tenants are the sorts of questions one might ask about one's partner's previous sexual partners.

The main terror inspired by these previous occupants is that they are dead, gone, finished; that they are not continuing the organic round elsewhere. They have become part of history, their lives cannot be experienced, only inferred.

One of the cornerstones of sceptical historical philosophy is that historical events cannot be directly known about; all we have access to are the written and structural documents left by past generations, from which history may be 'reconstructed'. This history becomes the formal history, the 'campus history', the history taught in schools, the network of kings and dates. Perhaps also a rather more intimate history reconstructed from diaries, wills, reports, enquiries and the press.

But there is another history, the oral history of folk memory,

AND THE DOGS BEGAN TO HOWL

—...—

Peter Rogerson

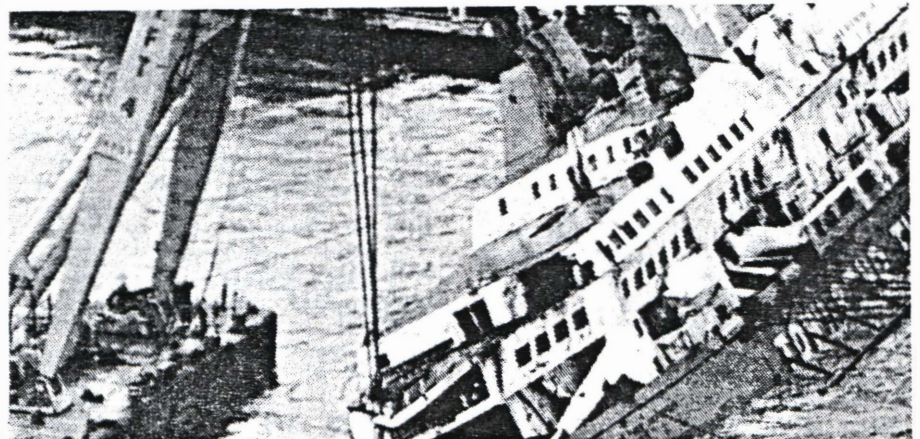
**investigates the significance of
the 'off campus' history of the
Haunted House**

ballads, songs, stories learned at mothers knee, passed on across generations — 'off-campus' history. Unlike the documents of campus history, this still has a power over the living, it can still be experienced. It is a kind of folklore, often at dramatic odds with the documentary history. It is a history which is a present reality, shaping the lives and experiences of its hearers. The 'history' of haunted houses is very much an 'off-campus', peoples' history, a folklore of what should be true rather than documentary truth.

At the heart and core of much ghostlore is a belief that certain events taking place in a space or territory, for ever render that space an inappropriate location for the mundane activities of life. The events remove it from the realm of secular to sacred space.

To take an example: most people (this writer among them) would consider it highly inappropriate for the salvaged Channel ferry *The Herald of Free Enterprise* ever to be used to carry passengers again. Its only morally coherent fate would be for it to be taken into deep, deep waters and scuttled. An analysis of the reasons for this feeling is difficult because a-rational, but would clearly centre on the sense of the *Herald's* place as a catastrophic scar on the memories of the living. It now, like Abraham Lincoln, belongs to history, and to its victims all else are intruders.

Here then is another step towards the social history of the haunted house. In popular imagination it is a place where an event has happened which closes the life of the house and consecrates it to a particular



The Herald of Free Enterprise
to its victims all else are intruders.

moment of history. This is principally because the community now sees that place as a monument to that event. Even if no documentary, 'campus' history attaches itself to the building, the sense of moral coherence demands that such history be supplied.

Having been consecrated to history, the price to be paid for its violation is for the violator to *directly* experience history. Hence the sign of the haunted house is its invisible parallel life wherein history is recapitulated.² Furthermore this history is experienced often as wilderness/chaos. This equation between history and wilderness operates because of the pervasive power that history has on us - the lives of all readers of *Magonia* are conditioned by the fact that, e.g., the Allies won World War II and not the Axis. History is an irreducible *fait accompli*, a brute, unchanging fact of nature. It has immense power over us, but we have no power at all over it.

That is not all, as Gauld and Cornell point out.³ In 'real' cases it is difficult to separate out poltergeists and hauntings. Note that in parapsychological folklore poltergeists are associated with the 'awakening' of the sexual energies of adolescents, hauntings with events taking place after death. Poltergeist disturbances are thus connected with the emergence of potentialities to create life (before the beginning), hauntings are connected with the fading away of what was once a life (after the end).

Polts and haunts thus mark the alpha and omega of the organic round; together they form a symbol of the creation and destruction of life. Sexuality, procreation, birth and death belong to the wilderness and they are barely contained within the structures of society. The shattering of the family home and property represents the incapacity of the family to tame the raw energies of creation and destruction.

Ghosts, haunts and polts then are the signs of the liminal zones between being and not being: the history of the haunted house is the history of repetitions of this organic round, or its dramatic severance.

Amongst the commonest motifs is that of the friendly or hostile house. The house appears to accept or reject the incomer, and the incomer's sense of ease or unease is projected onto the

house, aided and abetted by subtle clues from neighbours.

The theme of hostile houses suggests a confusion between people and places: the disturbed house is a metaphor for disturbed family dynamics. For example, one of Mackenzie's female correspondents reported that her childhood had been made unhappy by a 'hostile presence' in her house, centred on a bedroom which made her 'pale and thin unlike all the other children', and which made her reluctant to return home from school. These are typical symptoms of a victim of child abuse. This lady's mother refused to discuss the incidents, saying her own childhood had been made unhappy by the psychic delvings of her mother.

In another case a woman claimed that a hostile presence nearly caused the breakup of her marriage: her husband laughing at her fears caused her to panic and fall down stairs on more than one occasion - giving hints of suppressed violence.

In a case from Birmingham in 1955, a poltergeist was blamed for the death of a month-old baby. Raps and whisperings were heard in the house, and a four-year-old child saw a 'dog' sitting on the baby's face.^{7,13}

The traditional Victorian
haunted house was the
short-lease house,
where the servants came
with the property.
The archetypal modern haunted
house is the council house

At present no detailed studies exist which look at the haunted house from the 'new parapsychological' perspective. Osborne's study of 'The Woman in Brown',⁸ or Fodor on 'Ash Manor'⁹ being exceptions. Each such incident may be pregnant with meaning for the experient, even the story may be selected because it deals with the incomer's problems.

In the case of 'The Woman in Brown', the appearance of 'the woman' to the central percipient when a telephone rang, was traced through a network of past traumatic experiences, both real and fantasised, involving sudden death and blankets. In the Ash Manor case, the incidents revolved round a couple's sexual conflicts.

In such cases 'dead things which will not lie down' from the percipient's personal history, become connected with or projec-

ted onto the dynamic of the off-campus history of the territory where the events take place. The 'objectivity' and collective nature of such incidents derives from a collective fantasy producing trauma

As with much drama, the 'ghost story' of a property may, on closer reflection, show some correspondence to the personal concerns of the living. Such stories often involve violation of profound taboos, domestic murder, suicide, infanticide and forbidden passions.

It is difficult to say of course, how many alleged poltergeists are covers for domestic violence. This break-down of traditional family mores leads to a reversal of the home and family as a bastion against the forces of outer chaos. The haunted house is transformed into a wild anti-home, a place to flee from in fear, instead of run to for security.

The majority of haunted houses are not the property of the occupiers. The traditional Victorian haunted house was the short-lease house, where the servants came with the property. The archetypal modern haunted house is the council house. Such houses literally 'belong to someone else'. They are perhaps

more 'used', have more off-campus history than other, more settled, houses. There is a greater likelihood of a failure of bonding between the occupant and the house.

I have previously argued that the idea of the changeling arose as a mechanism to rationalise child abuse and the failure of parental bonding. The parents' feelings of hatred, aggression and alienation are projected onto the child itself, turning it into a hostile alien presence. May not a similar mechanism exist for houses: the incomer's sense of alienation from the house or community, and their failure to experience the house as 'home sweet home' are projected onto the house, now regarded, like the changeling child, as a hostile, threatening presence.

It is also possible that a sizeable proportion of haunted

houses are 'first time' homes, wherein young couples are experiencing the strains of marriage and adult responsibilities, and where the home is a source of worry rather than idealised domestic bliss. The problems of the 'home', in the sense of family life, become projected on the physical structure of the house. Alienation from the home becomes experience of the house as alien.

The mediums and exorcists who visit such houses know what their clients want and need: a good costume melodrama, full of fire and passion and suffering, which like a TV soap, tells the audience "You think you've got problems..." Such stories contain stock situations which inform the community of expected norms.

There is a school of sociologists which argues that society needs criminals and deviants to denounce, in order to demonstrate its rules and solidify the community in upholding them. The haunted house is a marking-stone of the violation of community taboos, a scapegoat in brick and stone for all the dark and unworthy secrets of the community. Do the incomers then take upon themselves the traumas of the whole community? Do they become involuntary sin eaters?

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. MEILAND, Jack W. *Scepticism and Historical Knowledge*, Random House, 1965.
2. The noises, groans and bangings reported in haunted houses are remarkably reminiscent of those of a charivari or rough-riding. In this traditional ritual the members of the community whose norms had been violated would parade would parade outside the offender's house banging pots, making groans and other noises, throwing pebbles at the windows, indeed generally behaving just like poltergeists, to make life unpleasant. The incomer had violated the taboo against entering space reserved for hauntings. Indeed, traditional lore connects hauntings with the violation of specific taboos, such as building houses over graveyards, playing with ouija boards or dancing on graves, all of which violate the sanctity and separateness of history and the ancestors.
3. GAULD, Alan and CORNELL, A. D. *Poltergeists*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979.
4. MACKENZIE, Andrew. *The Seen and the Unseen*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987.
5. OSBORNE, Edward. 'The Woman in Brown; an investigation of an apparition', *Journal of the S.P.R.*, vol. xxxv, no. 655 (Nov.-Dec. 1949), pp. 123-53.
6. FDDOR, Nandor. *The Haunted Mind; a psychoanalyst looks at the supernatural*, Helix press, 1959.
7. MOSS, Peter. *Ghosts over Britain*, Sphere, 1979.
8. BRADDOCK, Joseph. *Haunted Houses*, 1956.

THE ASTRONOMICAL MIRAGE HYPOTHESIS

A Solution of the UFO Problem

Steuart Campbell

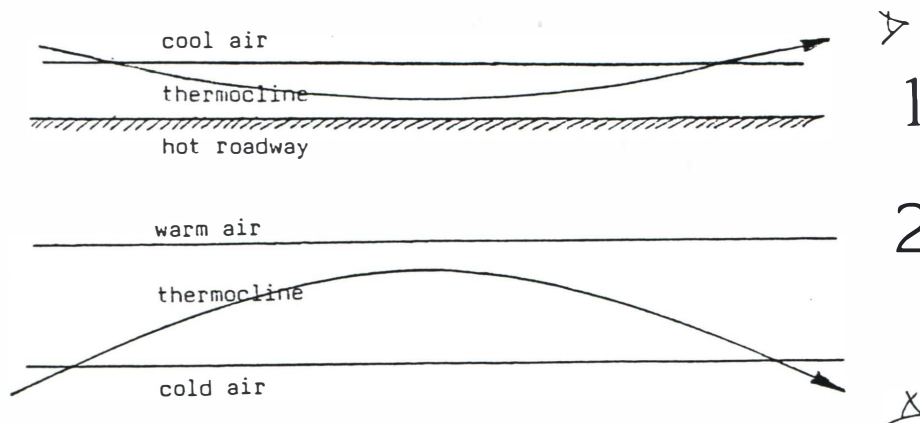
UFO reports are known to be caused by sightings of many different phenomena and objects and it is also known that many reports are caused by sightings of astronomical objects. However, there are some strange reports (what buffs call 'the core phenomenon') which seem to defy rational explanation. I shall show that not only can these reports be explained by astronomy and meteorological optics but that the phenomenon in question accounts for the consistent, universal reports of UFOs as discoids (besides some other characteristic shapes). The result must be that the UFO problem is effectively solved!

The mirage

The mirage is not an illusion; it is an image or images of a real object seen via abnormal refraction. To some extent the light from distant objects is always refracted in air if the air is not uniform in density and the light traverses the air at an angle to the planes of the density layers that is not a right angle. For example, the light from stars below the zenith is bent downwards in proportion to the zenith angle until, at the

temperature inversion, where a layer of warm air (untypically) lies over cold air or where the temperature rises with height (see Figure 2). Inversions often form in valleys or over water. It is the superior mirage which can explain UFO reports.

A mirage is not simply a displaced image; it consists of a double image with one image inverted under the other (upright) image (although some



horizon, the refraction is about half a degree. In a mirage a strong temperature gradient (a thermocline) produces much greater refraction, to the extent that the light rays are returned to the cool side of the thermocline if they approached from that side.

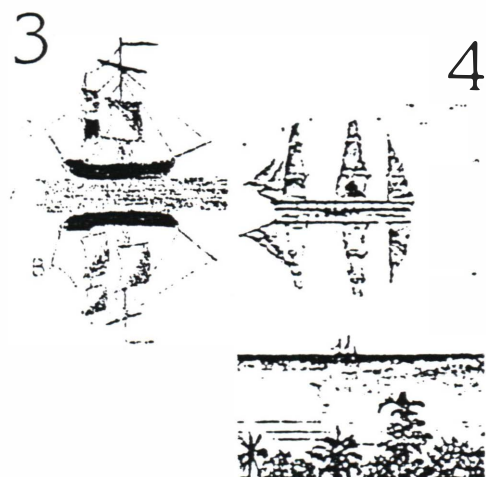
Figure 1 shows the situation above a hot roadway where a mirage of the sky appears as water on the road. This is known as an 'inferior mirage' because the image is below the object. When the image appears above the object the result is called a 'superior mirage'; such mirages can be caused by a meteorological condition known as a

times only one image may be visible). Moreover, the two images can vary in separation, sometimes well apart and sometimes close together. Indeed, the two images can merge into one another, producing an unrecognizable image, or reduce to a horizontal line! In addition the image(s) can become greatly magnified due to a lens effect of the inversion, the magnification being greatest near to the merge line between the two images. The magnified image(s) can appear very bright because the atmospheric lens gathers more light than would have reached the eye from an unmagnified image (as in a telescope). A mirage can be seen whenever the object and the

observer lie almost in the same plane as the thermocline, or tangential to it if it is curved. A moving thermocline can cause a mirage to move!

Superior mirages were first described by Joseph Huddart in 1797, but it was not until the publication of Samuel Vince's account in 1799 that science took an interest. In 1798 Vince observed and sketched images of ships seen across the English Channel from Ramsgate in Kent (England).

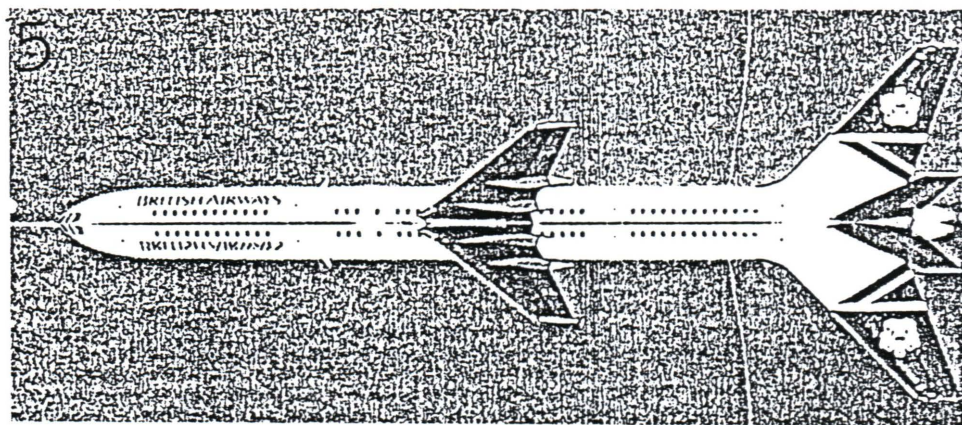
Fig. 3 shows one of his sketches, but Fig. 4 shows the degree of enlargement that can occur in a superior mirage. Modern mirages are more likely to be caused by aircraft (see Figure 5.)



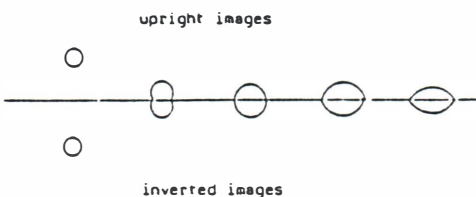
Astronomical mirages

Any prominent object near the horizon can stimulate a superior mirage (in the appropriate conditions). But it does not have to be a terrestrial object; mirages can be stimulated by bright astronomical objects (i.e. stars or planets) near the horizon. This introduces several new features. Because the light from an astronomical object is refracted differentially as it crosses the atmosphere its mirage is likely to display various and changing colours. Also, because scintillation is at a maximum near the horizon the image is likely to exhibit flashing lights, often coloured due to the refraction. Other features, such as 'beams', may be visible.

The double mirage of an astronomical object will (normally) show as two lights one above the other. Refraction should place red light at the base and violet light at the top of the upper image, with the colours reversed in the lower image. Various shapes will appear as the two images come together until, in circumstances where only



half of each enlarged image is visible, the classic 'flying saucer' will be formed (see Figure 6). The 'merge line' will sometimes be marked by the appearance of a line of unidentified images (the 'disc' of the 'saucer') in which coloured lights may appear.



Temporal variations in the thermocline may cause changes in shape and/or size during observation and changes in size may be perceived as changes in range. Enlarged and brightened images may be visible in daylight, so accounting for reports of the 'daylight disc'. Because of the more active atmosphere, daylight images are more likely to be mobile. Astronomical objects below the horizon can be visible on the horizon via a type of mirage called the Novaya Zemlya effect in which light is repeatedly refracted around the Earth for great distances.

UFO reports explained as mirages

Only Donald H. Menzel (in three books and various articles) and William Viezee and Gordon D. Thayer (in the Condon Report) have seriously considered mirages (including astronomical mirages) as an explanation for UFO reports. Menzel came to the idea after seeing what appeared to be a classic 'saucer' but which he later identified as an image of Sirius (it was actually Saturn!). Although he once suggested that Kenneth Arnold had seen a mirage of mountain tops he neither demonstrated this nor realized that the flashes Arnold reported were probably due to strong focusing across one or more temperature inversions. In fact Arnold did see mirages of nine

snow-covered peaks in the Cascade Range; the movement he attributed to them was entirely due to his own movement.

But although the UFO myth began with sight of a mirage of terrestrial objects it has been sustained mainly by reports of mirages of extraterrestrial objects! So many of the principal reports can be associated with prominent astronomical objects that it could be said that 'UFOs' are astronomical bodies! I have already shown how a mirage of Venus was responsible for the 1979 Livingston (Scotland) report,¹ and also how the same planet led to the 1980 Todmorden (England) report.² But it seems that Venus was also the object which 'landed' and terrified the villagers of Llanerchymedd in Anglesey (Wales) in 1978. Venus also caused the famous Nash-Fortenberry report of July 1952 (Virginia); it lay exactly on the horizon (as seen from the aircraft) in the direction from which the UFOs appeared to come. More recently (December 1978) Venus was the object seen and filmed from an aircraft flying off the coast of South Island, New Zealand; the planet, 8° below the horizon, was seen via a Novaya Zemlya image.

All the naked-eye planets can produce mirages.

Mirages of Jupiter have been responsible for many reports. In 1948, not only was it the object chased by the unfortunate Captain Mantell, it was the object which Lieutenant Gorman attempted to intercept over Hector Airport, Fargo. But Jupiter's most sensational appearance must be as the 'flying saucer' captured on film by Almiro Barauna as he stood on the deck of a Brazilian navy ship anchored off Trinidad Island in the South Atlantic in January 1958! Here, in daylight, a moving inversion bubble momentarily projected a merged mirage from Jupiter's position 2° above the

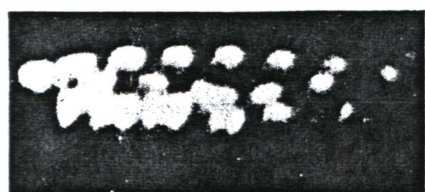
horizon in the west up and sideways until it appeared to hover near a rocky peak. This seems to be the only clear picture of such a daylight mirage.

Saturn has also caused UFO reports (as mentioned above). Its most famous appearance may be as the object which led to the Delphos (Kansas) 'landing' report of 1971, although attention was later transferred to Jupiter, which was also low on the horizon. More recently (May 1985) the planet was responsible for a report from Ventnor in the Isle of Wight (England).

Bright stars produce similar effects, even in daylight. Sirius, the brightest star, seems to have caused the UFO report from Kirtland Air Force Base near Albuquerque (New Mexico) in November 1957. It was also probably the principal object which led to the UFO reports by Rev. William Gill in Boianai (Papua New Guinea) in June 1959. Canopus, the second brightest star, is only visible to surface observers from places south of latitude 37° north. Consequently it accounts for many reports from the southern USA. In particular, and principally, it was the object seen and reported by police officer Zamora from Socorro (New Mexico) in April 1964. At the time it lay only a few degrees above the southern horizon over the valley of the Rio Grande.

Canopus may have been the object which appeared to hover over the aircraft flown by Valentich before he disappeared over Bass Strait (Tasmania) in 1978. Confused and alarmed by the mirage he may have undertaken manoeuvres which led to his crashing into the sea!

Some UFO photographs and films show mirages of stars. The Childerhose photograph (1956) shows a mirage of Vega, while a fragmented mirage of Spica explains the curious object found in the Montunau (New Zealand) photograph of 1979. (Figure 7)



Twin images of Deneb may explain the two moving objects on the famous Great Falls (Montana) film of 1950, while multiple images of both Deneb and Vega appear in the Tremonton (Utah) film of 1952.

Other bright stars can be identified as the sources of mirages which have resulted in prominent UFO reports. Capella led to the Travis Walton affair (1975); Fomalhaut caused the RB-47 incident of 1957; Altair (not Venus) was what President Carter saw in 1969; Antares was probably the central feature of the original report by Betty and Barney Hill (1961); Betelgeuse was the cause of the army helicopter incident at Mansfield (Ohio) in 1973; Aldebaran led to the Chiles-Whitted report of 1948 and a mirage of Rigel explains the South Hill (Virginia) report of 1967!

Conclusions

Astronomical mirages can explain so many UFO reports, especially the most intractable ones, that I can claim that the UFO problem is practically solved! A scientific hypothesis has been found which explains UFO reports; there is then no need to consider pseudoscientific or more exotic hypotheses and there is certainly no justification for the idea that UFO reports represent evidence for the activity of aliens or paranormal influences.

Features of those reports which are apparently inconsistent with the astronomical-mirage hypothesis (AMH) are likely to be due to the reporter's (and/or

the investigator's) ignorance of normal perceptual distortions, false associations and human fear responses. Accounts obtained by hypnosis are certainly unreliable.

It is now evident why UFOs are reported to be of a similar appearance all over the world; stars and planets can be seen from anywhere on Earth through an atmosphere which is as likely to produce an inversion in one place as another. The few basic shapes reported are consistent with the protean forms seen in mirages.

It is now also evident why UFOs are reported to move about the sky at great speed and execute 'impossible' manoeuvres; there are no limitations on the speed or manoeuvres of an image! The hypothesis also explains why UFOs are so often reported to be silent, even while executing manoeuvres which should cause much noise, such as travelling above the speed of sound.

The AMH accounts not only for the 'foo fighters' of the Second World War and the Korean War but also the mystery airships reported in the USA in the 1890s. I predict that this powerful hypothesis will find universal application and solve countless cases. It may even explain reports of other strange phenomena such as ball lightning and will-o'-the-wisp.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

The method of determining whether or not a UFO report was caused by an astronomical object is described in my article 'The astro-meteorological hypothesis for UFO reports' in *The Computer UFO Newsletter* (Vol. 2, No. 1)

1 'Livingston, a new hypothesis', *Journal of Transient Aerial Phenomena* (Vol. 4, No. 3, September 1986, pp 80-87).

2 'The Todmorden UFO report explained', *ibid.* (Vol. 5, No. 1, September 1987)

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. The light path in an inferior mirage on a hot roadway. Vertical scale exaggerated.

Figure 2. The light path in a superior mirage caused by a temperature inversion. Vertical scale exaggerated.

Figure 3. One of Samuel Vince's sketches of a superior mirage seen from Ramsgate in 1798.

Figure 4. An example of an enlarged double mirage image (from Menzel/Taves *The UFO enigma* (1977), but originally from Zurcher/Margollé *Meteors, aerolites, storms and atmospheric phenomena* (1876)).

Figure 5. A reconstruction of the appearance of a mirage of a Boeing 757 seen over Edinburgh on 30 September 1986.

Figure 6. Diagram showing how the two images of an astronomical body in a mirage can appear with different separation. As the images merge and enlarge they form a classic 'flying saucer'.

Figure 7. An enlargement of the object discovered on the Motunau photograph. It is a complex mirage consisting of multiple images of Spica.

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LETTERS



Dear John Rimmer,

I feel I must take at least some umbrage at corresponding editor Peter Rogerson's characterisation last issue of MUFON as "dinosaurian, monolithic and complacent". The use of the word 'dinosaurian' as a perjorative adjective is especially ironic in a journal given to updating mythology. In fact it's doubly ironic in that John Noble Wilford's *The Riddle of the Dinosaur* is reviewed in the same issue, a book which does much to demolish the outmoded perception of dinosaurs as a lugubrious evolutionary dead end.

My real concern in writing is that some of your readers may have been put off from subscribing to the *MUFON UFO Journal*, which I edit. By way of contrast with Mr Rogerson's opinions, I might pass on two others I received the same week. The first comes from Andy Roberts: "Incidentally I have just borrowed and read a pile of MUFON journals ... and I think it is one of the best UFO journals in the world, far surpassing any GB UFO magazine". The second comes from Bob Rickard: "I don't often write to other magazines, but here's a first: I thought the latest *MUFON UFO Journal* was very informative, and I read it through at one sitting (another rare phenomenon these days)!" If I ran blurbs on the back cover, I suppose I couldn't solicit better commentary.

Three of the last four issues have featured cover stories by Whitley Strieber, Budd Hopkins and Gary Kinder. In addition I have been studiously seeking contributions from England and have already published pieces by Jenny Randles and Hilary Evans, and anticipate more. The August issue will be a 24-page special symposium number. Future issues call for articles by Dennis Stillings, Michael Persinger, James Deardorff (on the occultness of the Meir case), folklorist

Peter Rojcewicz (MIB stories) and Jacques Vallée, to name but a few.

I do admit the existence of the problem Peter refers to, but I would also like you and your readers to know that I am doing my best to change the situation by making the Journal an open forum for all points of view on the UFO phenomenon. In that light may I extend a public invitation to your own subscribers and writers to contribute to the *Journal*? Some of us American dinosaurs are not so opposed to evolution as you might think from reading Mr Rogerson's comments.

Sincerely

Dennis Stacey, San Antonio, Texas.

Peter Rogerson writes: My 'dinosaurian' criticism was aimed mainly at MUFON as an organisation, rather than the Journal edited by Mr Stacey. I welcome his moves to broaden the scope and outlook of the magazine, and hope that his enlightened efforts receive the support they deserve from MUFON members and officers.

Dear Mr Rimmer,

I would be grateful if you would allow the right of reply to the article *Why Cracoe Fell!*, authored by David Clarke.

Furthermore, I would ask you as Editor of a publication that sanctioned the actual article, to make it clear that with reference to the so-called "verbal abuse and physical violence" which appeared under the headline *Why Cracoe Fell!* that by implication, it is suggested that physical violence took place. That is not the case, and should be made clear, furthermore, with regard to verbal abuse, such abuse was levelled by both sides, a point which David Clarke must surely acknowledge.

By entering comments about such events, I would challenge David Clarke, and anyone else for that matter, that if they are so adamant about these matters, they should take the matter up with people who are better qualified than I to pass judgement. In short, they should put up or shut up.

Yours faithfully,
Graham W. Birdsall, YUFOS,
Leeds.

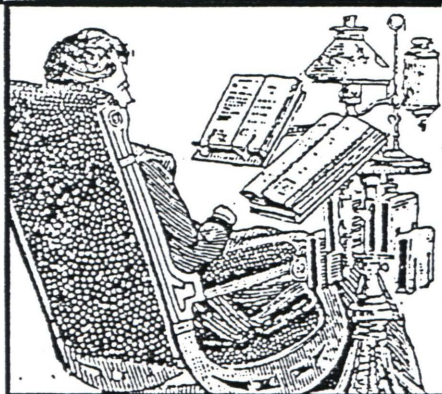
We are satisfied that the description of events as given in the article Why Cracoe Fell! is accurate. However, David Clarke has asked us to point out that the map reference given for Cracoe Fell was in error. The correct reference may be adduced from the map reproduced in the article.
John Rimmer

I received only one letter in response the first Computer Column in the last issue of *Magonia*. This came from Maurizio Verga, of Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici, Via Matteotti 85, 22072 Cernate (CO), Italy. He has established a computer UFO network (Rete Ufologica Computerizzata), which has produced a lot of programs and data bases. They also run a bulletin board two nights a week, using a Commodore 128. There are plans to start to start a 24-hour service using an IBM PC with 20 megabyte hard disc. The group also publishes *The Computer UFO Newsletter*. I can't make any comments about it as I have not yet seen a copy.

I am at present writing a file-handling program which will be used to catalogue book collections, principally the ASSAP Library. The program is being written in Mallard BASIC, using the Jetsam file-handling system, which avoids the problem with sequential files of sorting them into alphabetical order (it takes a long time). When it is completed I intend to make program and data available to anyone who has access to an Amstrad PCW.

Any contributions for this column should be sent to:

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High Street
BRACKNELL
Berkshire RG12 1LN



BOOK REVIEWS

RANDLES, Jenny, *The UFO Conspiracy; the first forty years*, Blandford Press, 1987, £10.95

This book has a curious nineteen-fifties feel about it. We appear to be back in a simpler era of Donald Keyhoe ufology. Cases are presented to the reader in a totally uncritical manner, and time after time the ETH is hinted at as the only realistic explanation for the events described. The broader perspectives on UFOs which opened in the sixties and seventies (and which Jenny Randles has written on as well as anybody) might never have happened. Alternative viewpoints are ruthlessly suppressed, sceptics are presented as a group of malicious characters who either get sadistic pleasure out of humiliating witnesses, or are in the pay of intelligence organisations.

In her early books Ms Randles never gave great attention to conspiracy theories of ufology, taking the line that yes, governments do investigate UFO reports, they'd be mad not to, after all one of them *could* be an enemy aircraft. Having done that, governments being secretive by nature, would not shout the fact from the rooftops. Ergo, a cover-up. A reasonable view and few would dissent. It would appear to be her involvement with Rendlesham which has changed her mind on this issue - "it literally changed my life". Naturally Rendlesham is featured in this book, and her treatment of it is revealing.

She describes the action of three USAF personnel moving into Rendlesham Forest to investigate a mysterious light, that fateful day in 1980: "They had to continue into the forest on foot. The only light they could see ahead was the beacon of Orford Ness lighthouse, five miles distant... it blinked on and off as it constantly did". But is this a true account? Did their report say 'We saw Orford Ness Lighthouse as we entered the forest'? No, it certainly didn't. Orford Ness was not brought into the discussion until much later, when the sceptics came on the scene. But of course, by putting that little phrase in, on no authority whatsoever, Randles is able to pre-empt the sceptical argument. Whatever one may think of the Orford Ness theory, the fact remains that the people who first entered the Forest did *not* report seeing the lighthouse *as such*.

The misdirection continues in the next sentence: "...once outside the gate the proximity of the trees swallowed this up and they could see nothing but blackness." This is just not true. The lights of Orford Ness *can* be seen from within the forest, as other investigators, both sceptical and pro-UFO have testified. But by putting in this little phrase argument is again pre-empted.

Sceptics of the Randles view must have some ulterior motive - "Whether the promotion of the absurd 'solution' to this case, initially by journalist Ian Ridpath then by the BBC and all those big-league newspapers, is coincidental or part of a carefully engineered plot is another thing you must make up your own mind about." Miss Randles leaves us in no doubt about which way we *should* make up our mind.

The plot goes further than Ian Ridpath. In Northern *UFO News* May-June 1987 Ms Randles suggests that recent media coverage of the high profile but rather nutty Atherius Society is part of a carefully

organised plot to overshadow the launch of this book. It seems a good way to explain possible poor sales: there was obviously such a plot to scupper my *Alien Abductions*!

Another disturbing piece of partial reporting occurs over the Trans-en-Provence (south of France) landing case, which is introduced here here as an example of physical evidence (alleged radio-active damage to plants). Not the slightest doubt of the physical reality of this case is allowed to sully this account. A much less exotic account of events at Trans has been presented by a group of French ufologists, and has been published in a journal (*UFO Presence*) which I know Ms Randles reads. In fact she's had an article published in a recent issue accusing *Magonia* of deliberately ignoring physical aspects of the UFO phenomenon! Whether the promotion of this case is through ignorance, or as part of a carefully engineered plot to cobble together a book out of nothing is another thing you must make up your own mind about!

It disturbing to see the sad death of Zigmund Adamski again being paraded in one of Ms Randles books. There is no connection whatsoever, except for a coincidence of name, between Mr Adamski's death and UFOs. Jenny Randles has admitted this, in *Magonia* and elsewhere. To introduce this tragedy into a book about UFO conspiracy and cover-up can only be for sensationalist motives, compounded by introductory sentences like "The evidence was so circumstantial that I refused to be associated with that particular story. Sensationalism of that kind helps nobody. Nevertheless facts are facts." What hypocrisy! Here's another fact: in 1983 Jenny Randles wrote in *The Pennine UFO Mystery*, concluding her first account of Adamski's death, "His family ought to be left in peace." What a pity she did not take her own advice.

Jenny Randles does not seem to understand the nature of the bureaucratic brush-off letter in dealing with annoying enquiries from members of the public. Because Ms Randles

takes her rôle as Britain's 'only professional UFO researcher' very seriously, there is no obligation on any government servant to do so. Letters or telephone calls from Ms Randles may be regarded with as much dread amongst MoD bureaucrats as they are amongst some ufologists. Evidence from this book and *Sky Crash* suggests that officials have developed considerable skills at avoiding sending replies - especially replies that might evoke a further response.

Jenny Randles hints several times in this book that the US and UK governments may have allowed certain potentially awkward incidents to become deliberately 'tainted' with UFOs to preclude serious consideration by the media. This is quite a plausible idea, which leads on to an interesting conspiratorial conjecture.

If Rendlesham was, say, a nasty incident with a Cruise missile, and you were the government, and you wanted to deliberately bring in UFOs as a red-herring, who would you send for? Or, more likely, who could you use, without their knowledge, who would be sure to bring any odd event - the death of a miner, for instance - into a UFO context? Such people, unwitting agents and dupes, are know in the intelligence world as 'useful fools'. This is yet another thing you must make up your own mind about. *John Rimmer*

DAVIES, P.C.W. and BROWN, J.R. (editors). *The Ghost in the Atom: A Discussion of the Mysteries of Quantum Physics*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, £5.50

In the eighteenth century George Berkeley argued that there are only two kinds of things in the universe -- minds and ideas. The concept of matter is derived from our perceptions which are generally much clearer and more coherent than our own thoughts. He said that the concept of matter is redundant because we have no reason to suppose that there has to exist something which underlies our perceptions and somehow causes them. This line of argument raised the famous question: How do we know that an object exists when nobody is perceiving it? Berkeley's answer was to the effect that everything is at all times

perceived by God; God creates and maintains the universe by keeping the idea of it in mind.

Many philosophers of Berkeley's time, and the overwhelming majority of them today, wish to consider the epistemological and ontological problems concerning the nature of space, time and matter without having to bring God into their arguments. However, they began to encounter serious difficulties when quantum theory was developed and its philosophical implications began to be discussed.

In discussing the question as to whether the external world exists independently of our observations of it the physicist David Bohm (one of the contributors to this book) says:

'Every physicist really believes that. For example, he talks about the universe having evolved before there was anyone around to look at it, except possibly God. Now unless you want to attribute it to God, as Bishop Berkeley did (and most physicists don't want to do that), you're unable to solve the problem of how the universe exists without physicists to look at it -- or without somebody else to look at it.'

The problem arises from the unreality of unobserved quantum events. One example given is that of light passing through polarizing filters arranged so that half of the light will pass through. If a photon approaches the filter it has a 50-50 chance of passing through, depending on its polarization state which, according to quantum theory, is unpredictable. There is no way, even in principle, of determining what must happen except by making an observation of the photon either passing through or failing to pass through the polarizer. It is the observation of the experimenter which causes one of the two possibilities to 'collapse' into reality.

There are many ways of trying to solve the problems of interpretation posed by quantum theory and several of them are discussed in this book. The competence of the editing and the clarity of the writing make it an excellent introduction to a difficult but fascinating subject. J.H.

..... FULLER, Paul and RANDLES, Jenny, *Mystery of the Circles*, BUFORA

Every summer for the past several years, as we all know, mysterious circles appear in fields in southern England. Fuller and Randles neatly divide their treatment of the subject into three parts: history (including press treatment of the phenomena), facts, and theories. Most of the theories are discussed, ranging from the plausible to the frankly insane.

One of the saner theories is that the circles are caused by whirlwinds. Some of the small whirlwinds which occur on hot summer days move only very slowly, or not at all, as Dr Meaden, editor of the *Journal of Meteorology* has pointed out. This may indeed be the explanation for some roughly circular areas of crop damage seen in fields, but most of the available photographs, including the one in this booklet, indicate that those which attract sufficient attention to be widely reported are rather too neat to be explained in this way. The central circle of a set which appeared in a field at Westbury has very sharp edges and is very large. This cannot have been produced by a whirlwind, because the speed of rotation of the air must decrease fairly gradually with distance from the centre, making any circle which it makes have rather 'fuzzy' edges. If the Westbury circle was made by a whirlwind then the wind at one point must have been at storm force with the wind only a few inches away almost calm, which is absurd.

I can recommend this booklet as an interesting and useful summary of the facts and theories on this peculiar topic.

John Harney



Rings at Cheesefoot Head In 1981

..... GOSS, Michael, *The Halifax Slasher*, Fortean Times Occasional Paper no. 3, 1987. £2.50.

Moving from maniacs on the London underground to mania stalking the streets of northern England, Mick Goss examines another urban terror. In the late 'thirties, the city of Halifax was unwilling host to a 'slasher', a shadowy figure who would leap at passers-by, cutting at them with a razor, slashing their clothes and often wounding them seriously. The panic spread from Halifax throughout the north of England and even further afield (we are particularly intrigued to note a case in Brentford).

An atmosphere of hysteria soon

built up, with vigilante groups patrolling the streets, falling upon anyone who looked in the least suspicious (i.e., was not a member of the vigilante group). Newspaper reports told of a city under seige, few daring to venture out at night - even the chip shops reported a drop in business. All attempts to trap the maniac proved ineffectual - until the men from The Yard were brought in. In true Edgar Lustgarten manner they soon had the case bang to rights.

But the solution was even more amazing than the antics of the slasher himself. I'm not going to tell you what that solution was, because besides being an exemplary Fortean study, this monograph is also a true detective story, and only a

cad would give the ending away.

The case of the Halifax Slasher is much more than just the story of a mad criminal in a provincial city - it tells us much about urban life, the nature of fear, and the monsters that lurk in the shadows of our streets - and our minds. John Rimmer

..... BARROW, Logie, *Independent Spirits: spiritualism and English plebeians, 1850-1910*, History Workshop/Routledge Kegan Paul, 1987, £9.95.

In spite of its at times dense academic style this book illuminates a forgotten chapter in the history of ideas: the overlap of spiritualism with popular socialism and radicalism.

That this history has been forgotten is not surprising. Writers such as Brian Inglis have long been concerned to present us with a picture of Victorian spiritualism depicting eminent scientists gathered to witness inexplicable phenomena in the drawing room of a sympathetic member of the aristocracy. Their critics such as Trevor Hall and Ruth Brandon have been more concerned to detract from the reality of the phenomena witnessed in such settings than to question this view of spiritualism.

On the other side many depictions of the origins of socialism have been concerned to depict studious working-men either demonstrating by their sobriety and respectability their right to a place in the social order, or learning the rational and scientific doctrine of Marxism, according to the predilections of the writer.

In fact early spiritualism and radicalism shared several concerns. Claims that ordinary working-class people might commune with the dead undercut the claims of the churches to be the custodians of a once and for all divine revelation and as a result some secularists and freethinkers looked favourably on these claims, while some spiritualist papers carried ringing denunciations of 'priestcraft'.

By contrast with modern parapsychologists doggedly searching for a repeatable experiment to impress the scientific community, many

Victorian spiritualists confidently felt themselves to be on the threshold of a new era of revelation in which general acceptance of spiritualism would unite humanity; a belief that paralleled socialist ideas of an immanent new dawn.

It was in this climate George Holyoake, the freethinker whose 1840 trial for blasphemy became a *cause célèbre*, published radical, atheist and spiritualist works on his press; the journal of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation reported on spiritualist activities; Karl Marx's associates included the spiritualist George Saxton, and W T Stead the famous Victorian journalist combined social exposés with spiritualist propagandising (the connection between populist journalism and spiritualism has since been maintained by figures such as Hannen Swaffer, and today Derek Jameson who has recently championed the mediumship of Doris Stokes).

As with nineteenth century astrology these activities indicate a climate in Britain in which occultism overlapped with popular publishing and self education rather than, as on the continent being the concern of wealthy members of Theosophist and quasi-Masonic groups. Barrow suggests that a similar culture seems to have existed in the USA at the time, where it may even have drawn part of its inspiration directly from the shamanist traditions of the Red Indians and imported African slaves,

Roger Sandell

BARDENS, Dennis, *Psychic Animals*, Hale, 1987, £10.95.

The latest bit of monkey business from the author of *How Healthy are You and training for Democracy* is something of a mixed bag of Bonio.

It comes out of the traps at top speed, takes up the running, then unaccountably falters on its paws, rolls over and 'dies for its country' in a manner beloved of spaniels the world over. So what's it all about?

Mr Bardens puts forward the proposition much favoured of animal fanciers that our furred and feathered buddies possess 'certain powers' which are presently beyond our comprehension. He cites numerous instances which he

assures us have been painstakingly researched and vetted (geddit?),

However, many an apocryphal yarn then follows, and all our favourites are there: the beasties who trail their masters who have moved house 1000 miles away, turning up on their doorstep bedraggled but happy. The talking horses of Elberfeld are there (although I seem to recall their debunking some years back) and a good many more.

But it is all good fun, rumbustiously written, lively, even thought-provoking. But after about five chapters the author goes out for a pint and never comes back. The book runs out of steam and we are left with a few vacuous chapters about animal mythology, which are notable only for lack of accurate research.

However for all this questions still arise. Are for example 'homing pets' acting on their own impetus, or are they responding to 'beacons', psychically projected by their grieving owners? Are we simply investing 'occult powers' to simple beasts to salve our own consciences for the wrongs we constantly perpetuate on the animal kingdom, in 'domesticating' creatures we do not truly understand?

I am tempted to draw your attention to a certain dog Chips in the Borough of Brentford. This canine prodigy speaks three languages and is a member of Mensa. But I shall not, for fear of a protracted letter onslaught from the likes of Steauwert Campbell and Ian Ridout! Robert Rankin

VON FRANZ, Marie-Louise, *On Dreams and Death: A Jungian Interpretation*, Shambhala, 1986, \$17.95

Psychoanalysts study dreams for the clues which they give to the workings of the subconscious mind. They see dreams as being full of symbols which must be correctly interpreted if the meanings of the dreams are to be made clear. Marie-Louise von Franz belongs to the Jungian school of analysis, which stresses the universality of dream imagery. Her aim in this book is to explore the response of the subconscious to the impending death of the subject. She discusses the death dreams of some of her patients, but 'only when #

KINDER, Gary, *Light Years: an investigation into the extraterrestrial experiences of Eduard Meier*, Atlantic Monthly Press, \$18.95, 1987.

The case of Eduard ('Billy') Meier has been a *cause célèbre* in American ufology for several years now, but is still relatively unknown in Britain. Meier, a Swiss farmer and ex security-guard, claims to have been in regular contact with space visitors from the Pleiades, and has taken hundreds of photographs allegedly showing the Pleiadians' 'beam-ships'.

Meier is obviously a charismatic figure - heavily built and heavily bearded, widely travelled (he did the old 'hippie trail' through the Middle East and India in the sixties), with one arm missing as a result of a road accident (a peculiarly shamanistic touch). His reports of contact have built him up into a major cult figure, and he lives in his \$240,000 farm (paid for by his admiring fans) surrounded by acolytes from all over Europe and beyond.

His contacts all take place in conveniently secluded forest clearings with no other eye-witnesses, and his photographs all have a satisfyingly bogus look to them. This of course serves to guarantee that a certain type of researcher who wishes to demonstrate his wide-open-mindedness, will come along with a variety of expert testimony (from, amongst others, Stevie Wonder's sound engineer) who will vouchsafe that the photographs and sound tapes (he has them too - sounds of the saucers revving up) could not possibly have been faked by a one-armed Swiss ex security-guard.

I am less certain of the capabilities of one-armed Swiss ex security-guards, and prefer to keep an open mind on that as well. However, the investigators (a group associated with an American computer security company) know all about that sort of thing. We are told that Meier space messages are very significant because they contain references to tachyons (theoretical sub-atomic particles which travel faster than light) which no Swiss security guard should know about. Of course readers of *Magonia* have known all about them since 1970 when we published a brief note on the matter at the time they were being debated widely in the popular scientific press.

The investigators demonstrate what Peter Rogerson calls the 'Herr Professor' school of research. No thicko peasant from the boondocks is going to be able to outwit Herr Professor from the Big City. How can some naive uneducated son of the soil turn out photographs that baffle NASA's finest?

The trouble is, of course, that Meier is not a son of the soil, and he does not live in the boondocks. Despite the image which is assiduously cultivated throughout this book of Meier being some semi-educated third-world subsistence farmer living far from civilization, newspapers, TV, public libraries and photo laboratories, Meier actually lives, remember, in Switzerland, a country with some of the highest standards of living, best educational systems and finest transport networks in the world. It supports hundreds of magazines and newspapers and has several nationwide TV channels.

Why then does Welch (one of the investigators) write nonsense like this: "What's interesting is that the man who wrote the notes [about tachyons] has a formal education equivalent to the fifth or sixth grade. He does not live near major libraries, he does not live near major scientific centers... that did not make sense coming from a man out in the remote countryside of Switzerland..." [My italics]. Kinder reports that "Welch came away thinking that Meier knew more than he should... for his station in life." What bloody insolence!

Is this deliberate deceit to give a false impression of Meier's remoteness and naivety, or just arrogant American dismissal of Europe as a primitive place, lacking the benefit of such advanced technical minds as Stevie Wonder's recording engineer and Hollywood special effects men?

Once again, I'm glad to say, Herr Professor has been well and truly taken to the cleaners by a wily peasant. Good on yer, Billy, and here's to the next \$240,000!

John Rimmer

death has actually occurred soon after such dreams have they been included in this study'. The reason for this restriction is not made clear -- after all, everyone dies eventually.

Traditional beliefs about life after death and the imagery associated with such beliefs and with burial customs are described and discussed in great detail. There is considerable emphasis on the concept of death as the passing from earthly life to a more enhanced state of being, which the author sums up as follows:

'All the dreams of people who are facing death indicate that the unconscious, that is, our instinct world, prepares consciousness not for a definite end but for a profound transformation and for a kind of continuation of the life process which, however, is unimaginable to everyday consciousness.'

This is a subject on which it is very difficult to write sensibly, but the author has achieved a readable and unsensational style. I suspect, though, that this book will not find favour with those who are unsympathetic to Jung's ideas.

John Harney

DAY, Harvey. *Into the Unknown*. Bishopsgate Press, 1987. £4.95

A collection of anecdotes about cases of telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance etc., with many of the stories being about animals with apparent psychic powers. Most of them are unreferenced, and the book is presumably intended to entertain rather than to inform.

John Harney

CHAUVIN, Rémy. *Parapsychology: When the Irrational Rejoins Science* (translated by Katharine M. Banham). Jefferson, North Carolina and London, McFarland & Company, 1985. £18.95

This is an introduction to parapsychology intended for the non-specialist. Chauvin does not seek to establish the reality of psychic phenomena as he regards this as already being well established by laboratory experiments. However, he regards laboratory studies as being too restrictive and artificial to enable us to devise a coherent theory to explain the

phenomena and urges closer study of events which occur in the wider world. The examples he discusses range from divination and telepathy to table turning and spoon bending.

The general approach is somewhat credulous with a marked reluctance to take seriously any 'normal' explanations, which is a feature of so many books on this subject.

Most of the topics discussed will be too familiar to the majority of our readers to be worth mentioning here, but they may be of interest to anyone who has no previous knowledge of the subject.

One chapter is devoted to a somewhat incoherent attempt to make a connection between psychic phenomena and quantum theory. Much is made, of course, of the importance of the 'observer' in describing any experiment involving quantum theory, and the famous paradoxes thrown up by attempts by philosophers of science, and some physicists, to interpret the theory are discussed.

One of these (surprise, surprise) is Schrödinger's cat paradox. According to Chauvin, Schrödinger had actually carried out a version of his famous 'thought experiment' (but without endangering the life of the cat). As soon as I saw this I was keen to get hold of a copy of his paper describing this experiment but (surprise, surprise again) Chauvin does not give the vital reference.

If you know very little about psychic events, but want to believe in them, then this is the book for you.

John Harney

LeSHAN, Lawrence. *The Science of the Paranormal: The Last Frontier*. Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, The Aquarian Press, 1987. £6.99

This is a revised edition of 'From Newton to ESP', published in 1984 and reviewed in *Magonia* (No. 19, May 1985), so there is little point in reviewing it all over again. Although the author's aim is to reconcile parapsychology with modern science, the major questions discussed (e.g. the nature of consciousness) tend to be philosophical rather than scientific.

John Harney

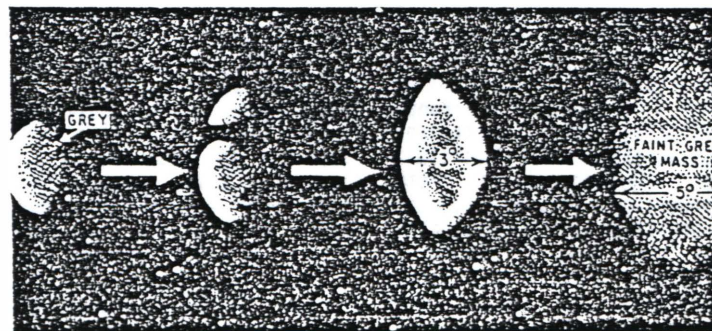
CORLISS, William R. *The Sun and Solar System Debris: A Catalog of Astronomical Anomalies*. The Sourcebook Project, P.O. Box 107, Glen Arm, MD 21057, USA, 1986.

Another volume in this excellent series. As usual, a wide range of topics is covered. A great deal of space is given to observations of unusual comets and meteors. There are also accounts of anomalous star-like objects and objects seen crossing the face of the sun or moon. I was

a little surprised, though, to find no mention of the famous phantom satellite of Venus. UFO investigators and researchers will find the sections on anomalous meteoric phenomena of particular interest.

As with the other volumes in this series, all classes of observation are discussed and evaluated in a sober and reasonable manner, and a reference is given for each report.

John Harney



Evolution of the July 29, 1970, nebulous meteor over Dover. (X29)

CLARKE, David, and WILSON, Rob. *Strange Sheffield: Legends, Folklore and Mysteries of Hallamshire* 1987. Available from David Clarke, 6 Old Retford Road, Handsworth, Sheffield, S13 9QZ. £X.XX including post and packing.

This large, well-researched booklet is an addition to ASSAP's Project Albion, which is an ambitious attempt to produce a 'Domesday Book of the Paranormal'. How far that will progress is open to question, but on its own *Strange Sheffield* presents a detailed picture of the mysteries that have plagued that city and its surrounding countryside ('Hallamshire').

It is interesting to see that David Clarke, like many other British ufologists, regards UFOs as only a small (or modern) part of our interaction with the landscape and the energies emanating from it, which the ancients perceived and marked. Therefore it is not surprising that several leys are discussed at the end of this text.

Fortunately, the 'earth energy' point of view is not overtly pressed in most of the booklet, which deals with such topics as the dragon of Wansley, the legends of Robin Hood, and the appearances of Spring Heeled Jack. In the

latter case it is noteworthy that this entity, which terrified young women and was associated with a burial ground, gave rise to virtual riots in Sheffield in 1873. Such apparitions have been regarded as the link between latter-day ghosts and contemporary UFO entities.

When details of such incidents are examined, it is not so much the place which is important but the expectations of the observers, the intervening variable of some kind of earth energy is still problematic, but it does offer a romantic and powerful reason for understanding, preserving and justifying time and effort to look after the landscape and the folklore and legends that have become associated with it.

Despite my niggling doubts, David Clarke and Rob Wilson give a great example of a well-balanced use of field and library research, and unlike some in this field they do not jump to wild assumptions or try to bend the facts to fit elaborate speculative structures.

Nigel Watson

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